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Don't sacrifice jobs to finance education in Texas

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Those who advocate taxing business or income for the sake of financing education always sound so reasonable. Their motives seem so pure. What they advocate does say a lot about their motives. Problem is, what it says is not good.

Education, we are constantly told, is the great equalizer. It is key to opening opportunity for all. Education is about preparing children for adulthood and responsibility.

What we hear more often, however, is that education is about preparing students to compete in a global economy for the sake of future prosperity. In other words, for its loudest advocates, government education is all about jobs, productivity, careers and living the good life.

But what is it that we are taxing? The very job, business and "good life" opportunities public education is supposed to produce.

A well-known economic principle is that you get less of what you tax. So, how can someone claim to be for jobs and business opportunities on the one hand, but reduce them on the other?

It's not rocket science to see a contradiction here. As an example of just how contradictory this is, consider Ohio and its basket-case economy. Thirty years ago, that state ranked with Texas among the best states to live in for the sake of holding on to your hard-earned money. Then Ohio instituted an income tax.

Today, Ohio college students, undoubt-

edly well-educated with lots of economic opportunity tax dollars, load up on buses for out-of-state job interview trips. The prosperity-producing economic opportunities no longer are in Ohio.

Lots of countries have practiced the "taxation of prosperity for prosperity's sake" model. China, the former Soviet Union and various East European countries are among the best examples. Present-day Germany, with its 12-plus percent unemployment rate, comes to mind as well.

The taxation-for-education crowd would have us believe they are all about opportunity, but they would tax the very opportunity they claim they want to create through education.

They are not about opportunity at all. They are simply about control. They, like Plato, fancy themselves the all-knowing philosopher-kings who know what is best for the rest of us.

Business and income taxes are a convenient means to mold the economy. Centralized education systems are a convenient means to mold minds.

Winston Churchill once said that to believe we can tax ourselves into prosperity "is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle."

Low taxes alone do not guarantee future jobs. But high taxes can absolutely prevent those jobs from being created. ■

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